

Grade 8 English Language Arts Syllabus 2020-2021

"Remember that wherever your heart is, there you will find your treasure."

"Recuerda que siempre que tu corazón, allí usted encontrará el tesoro."

تذكر أنه حيثما قلبك، وهناك سوف تجد كنزك

— Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

Contact Information: Ms. Jessica DeMotto
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 Classroom Phone #: 608.663.4108



Course Description: The focus of English Language Arts (ELA) class is developing students' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. In addition to our academic studies, the classroom environment will also promote socioemotional growth and encourage students to become lifelong learners and critical/creative thinkers. Students will read and analyze both classic and modern texts including: novels, short stories, films, speeches, art and poetry to explore themes such as self-identity, culture and the Sinsinawa Dominican values of truth, justice, community, compassion, and partnership in our lives and worldwide. Students will participate in a diverse range of writing activities, assignments, and projects in order to strengthen their communication skills, and develop confidence in their voice as a writer. Our learning targets encourage students to read critically, write consciously, speak one's truth, and be open-minded when listening to the ideas of others.

Topics of Study:

Literature Units and Texts:

(NOTE: Texts and units may vary due to student interest)

- Shakespeare and Drama Unit
 - Students will read *Hamlet* (tragedy) and attend and American Players Theater performance (comedy)
 - Students will read a modern-day middle school/young adult book adaptation of classic Shakespearian narrative
- *The Alchemist* (Book) and *Life of Pi* (Film) Unit
 - Students will study, compare and contrast the elements of fiction, archetypes, and the hero's quest
- Graphic Novels and Classic Literature
 - Students will engage in a new medium (visual literacy) for a classic story (Examples: *The Odyssey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *A Christmas Carol*, etc.)
- Nonfiction and Social Justice Unit
 - Students will explore current events, historical primary texts, and conducting research into a social issue of interest
 - Students will read *I Am Malala* Young Readers Edition
 - Students will watch, analyze and discuss a documentary (Example: *Poverty, Inc.*)
- *Touching Spirit Bear* Unit
 - Students will develop a personal narrative around the power of overcoming adversity and embracing positive choices for the good of personal healing and restorative justice

Writing and Language Skills:

- Written and verbal communication including essays, projects, and presentations
- Types of writing:
 - Narrative: Telling a story
 - Descriptive: Painting a picture with language
 - Expository: Stating the facts
 - Persuasive: Convincing the audience
 - Creative: Exploring imaginative ideas
- Writing process: Prewriting, drafting, revising, and proofreading
- Guided resources, peer writers' workshops, one-on-one student-teacher conferences with discussion on craft and feedback ("Pros" and "Grows"), etc.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students will make connections to Native American culture, identity and values that promote the importance of human dignity and healing ● Power of Poetry Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students will read and analyze lyric and narrative poetry as well as create a personal piece that empowers an aspect of the students' personal identity/truth ○ Students will participate in spoken word slam celebration ● <i>How to Read Literature Like a Professor: For Kids</i> (Intermittent chapter readings throughout all units of study - Continued study across trimesters) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students will build on reading skills for high school ○ Students will practice identifying universal themes and text-to-text connections ● <i>Literature and Language Arts: Understanding Literature</i> textbook (Intermittent chapter/supplemental readings throughout all units of study - Continued study across trimesters) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Writing mechanics, organization, style, fluency and idea development ● Spelling, vocabulary, grammar, conventions and parts of speech practice ● Research skills and identify reliable sources ● Create an argument with supporting evidence and counter viewpoints ● Creative writing skills and expression of ideas ● Identify themes and main arguments |
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Classroom Rules: “The Triple R”

1. Be Respectful
 - Listen and learn when others are speaking
 - Treat teachers, classmates, classrooms, and class materials with courtesy
 - Use appropriate language at all times
2. Be Responsible
 - Bring all materials with you each day
 - Arrive on time to class
 - Follow directions
3. Be Remarkable
 - Give your best every day
 - Ask for help when needed
 - Encourage your classmates and be supportive
 - Maintain a positive attitude



Expectations:

- I expect all students to be present and timely to class. Being tardy or absent will result in a loss of valuable learning experiences.
 - Preplanned Absence: Families should contact Tricia Passage (Administrative Assistant), Lauren Costello (Assistant Principal), and the homeroom teacher via email regarding information on pre-planned absences. Students are responsible for connecting with their teachers in-person before the planned absence in order to receive any classwork/homework. Extensions may be granted.
 - Unplanned absence: Families should contact Tricia Passage (Administrative Assistant), Lauren Costello (Assistant Principal), and the homeroom teacher via email the day of the unplanned absence. I strongly believe that family and health comes first. Families are welcome to pick up any missing work during the absence although are not expected to. Students should connect with their teachers regarding any missing work when they return from their absence. Extensions will be granted.

- Participation is important! Have the courage to participate and have your thoughts, ideas and questions heard. Your thoughtful, informed contributions to class discussions are what will make the course interesting and exciting for all of us.
- Complete your homework. Students will have daily work assignments and larger, long-term projects and essays that will require work time outside of class. I will always be available for support during in-class work time and additional study halls.
- Respect others, respect yourself, respect the materials, and respect the space/environment. Use kind words and actions. Always speak and act in a way that is constructive and builds an atmosphere of empathy and kindness. Use materials and furniture the way it was meant to be used. Clean up your space before you leave it.
- No cell phones, smart watches, or other electronics are allowed in class except for the school-issued Chromebook laptop. Students must use the Chromebook assigned to him/her.
- No gum, food, or drink (except bottled water) are allowed in class.
- Bring all required materials to class daily.
 - Language Arts folder and notebook (any color)
 - Writing instruments
 - Pencils (with erasers) and pens (black/blue)
 - Highlighter (any color)
 - Post-It Notes
 - Used for annotating texts (any size/color)
 - Students and families are also welcome to purchase copies of the texts (books) for personal use and it is highly recommended, although not required.
 - Student planner (physical copy or digital calendar)
 - Use your planner daily! It is the most efficient way to keep track of assignments and personal goals.
 - Completed homework (daily assignments, essays, projects, etc.)
 - Charged Chromebook in protective case
 - Make a habit of charging your computer each night and bringing it to school with you every day.
 - Students are welcome to bring in a pair of headphones that are compatible with their school-issued Chromebook laptop. These may only be used with teacher permission during work time. Extra pairs of headphones will be available in the classroom.
 - Copy of current classroom text/book

Late/Missing Work Policies:

If you know you will be missing class time or you will be unable to complete work on its scheduled due date, discuss this with me in advance to request an extension. If there is a personal emergency that affects your work, communicate with me so I can be fair in assessing your work. Family and health should always come first.

- 10% reduction of grade if work is handed in late on the same day it is due
- 25% reduction of grade for late work handed in after due date
- Zero for missing work. No missing work will be accepted after the final unit assessment

Cheating and Plagiarism:

Cheating and plagiarism will result in a zero on the assignment and will require further consequences. We value your own ideas and personal growth.

Extra Help:

I am always available for extra help during class work time, study halls, and before/after school by appointment. Please email me in order to schedule additional support.

Grading:

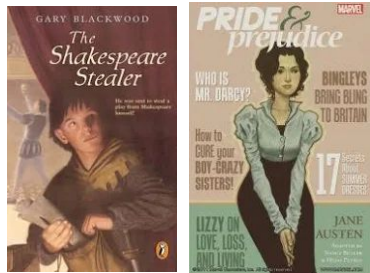
Part of your grade will be based on your ability to meet the content standards in writing, reading, speaking, listening, and language, while the other part will be based on participation, including large and small group discussion, being an active volunteer/listener, completing homework, etc. Overall grades are based on the quality of work. RenWeb will be updated after work is graded, allowing extra time for late work and larger projects and essays. Students can check-in with me before or after school or during a study hall to discuss grades, progress, etc.

Grade Categories:

Daily work/Homework/Participation	30%
Tests/Quizzes	30%
Projects/Essays	40%



"Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education."



— Martin Luther King Jr.

